



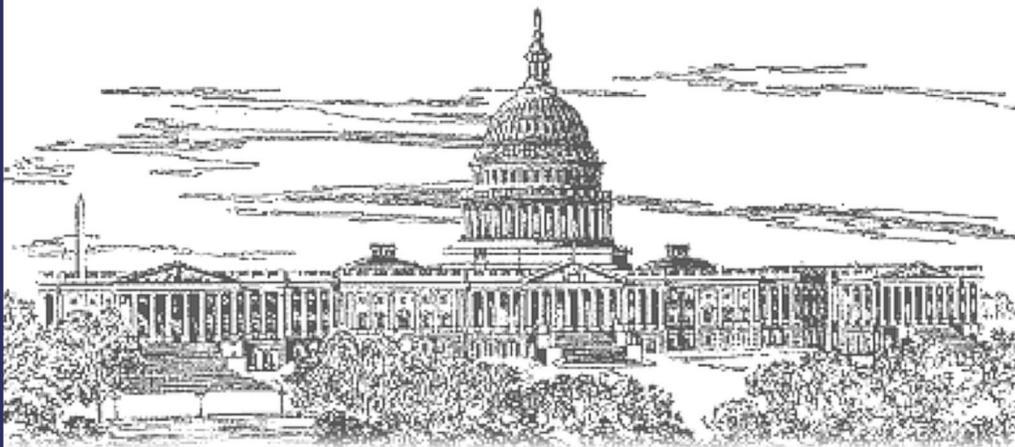
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

# CODEL THOMPSON

MEXICO, HONDURAS, AND THE VIRGIN ISLANDS



APRIL 10-13, 2007



**News Clips, Press Releases,  
Correspondence, and Photos**

# Mexico

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Delegation Members held a bilateral meeting with Mexico's Interior Minister, Secretary Ramirez Acuña to discuss border security cooperation and emerging threats including narcotrafficking and smuggling.



The Delegation and US Ambassador Garza (3rd from left) were invited to take a photograph with Secretary Ramirez Acuña before departing.

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## U.S. Congressional Delegation Visits Mexico City

April 11, 2007



Press Release

Statement by Ambassador Antonio O. Garza

"Yesterday and today, members of the U.S. House of Representatives' Committee on Homeland Security visited Mexico City to meet with their Mexican counterparts and discuss pressing security issues in both our countries.

"The representatives were Bennie Thompson (D-MS), Mike Rogers (R-AL), Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX), Donna Christensen (D-VI), Henry Cuellar (D-TX), Al Green (D-TX), Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC), Daniel Lungren (R-CA), and Bill Pascrell (D-NJ).

"The U.S. delegation met with Secretary of Interior Francisco Javier Ramirez Acuña, Secretary of Public Security Genaro Garcia Luna, and Mexican congressional representatives. Mexican law enforcement teams also gave a presentation on the challenge of combating and defeating organized crime. During these meetings, which the delegation members described as 'productive and informative,' both officials from Mexico and the United States recognized the urgent need for our countries to continue to cooperate to make our communities safer.

"Additionally, the staff of Casa Alianza, which runs a network of shelters dedicated to street children, many of whom are trafficking victims, delivered an outstanding presentation about the dangers that human trafficking presents to the most vulnerable members of Mexican society.

"This was an important visit by our U.S. lawmakers. Open dialogue between governmental leaders from our two countries is a key part of the success of the American and Mexican relationship and a necessity to keep our countries secure."

# Mexico

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## Pascrell shares insights from Mexico trip

May 6, 2007  
By Samantha Henry  
The Herald News (NJ)

PASSAIC -- Mexican business leaders marked Cinco de Mayo on Saturday by gathering to hear a firsthand account from Rep. Bill Pascrell Jr. of his recent trip to their home country.

Pascrell, D-Paterson, who recently returned from visits to Mexico and Honduras, and from meetings in Washington, D.C., with several Latin American presidents, gave an overview of immigration reform, trade initiatives and homeland security issues to a crowd of several dozen business leaders at Los Arcos Mexican restaurant in Passaic.

"It's very interesting that no one ever asks the Mexicans in this country for input on these issues," he said.

Pascrell described the mood in Washington, and took questions from the group on the status of immigration legislation working its way through Congress.

"We have not had immigration reform, because we in Congress haven't come up with an agreement to help the most people," he said.

He added that he did not support ideas like deputizing local police to enforce immigration law -- a move under consideration in Morristown -- or immigration rules that would break apart mixed-status families.

Pascrell addressed trade initiatives between the U.S. and various Latin American countries, saying he felt that the North American Free Trade Agreement, or NAFTA, had not been successful for either country.

Bouncing a laser pointer beam back and forth across the Mexico-U.S. border on a map, he spoke of the legacy of NAFTA.

"They said when NAFTA was first signed that 'This trade deal is so important, that people will stop crossing the border,'" Pascrell said.

But he said 2.5 million manufacturing jobs had been lost in the U.S. because of NAFTA, and that Mexico hadn't fared well, either.

"Wages in Mexico were suppressed by 10 percent," he said. "Whether the cheap labor is here or in Mexico, I don't call that trade, I call it slavery."

Pascrell said that he would only support trade initiatives between countries that met labor protection rules for both countries involved, as well as environmental protection guidelines and human rights standards.

He then took questions from the audience, which included Passaic Mayor Samuel Rivera and several local Mexican business owners.

When asked about an initiative to construct a wall along more of the Mexico-U.S. border, Pascrell said he didn't think that was where Congress should be concentrating its efforts.

"I'm not too excited about the wall; I'm more interested in a comprehensive immigration plan," he said.

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# Mexico

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## Message from the Ambassador of the United States of America

May 17, 2007



Embassy of the United States – Mexico  
Amb. Antonio O. Garza

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

Today, the U.S. Senate, with White House support, reached a tentative agreement on an overhaul of our country's immigration laws. The Senate will vote on the agreement sometime in the next week. President Bush made clear in a statement today that "this proposal delivers an immigration system that is secure, productive, orderly and fair," and he urged all members of Congress to support it.

Also today, the U.S. Treasury announced the designation of 18 entities as comprising part of the financial network of Mexican narcotics kingpin Ismael Zambada Garcia. This designation of six companies and 12 individuals in Mexico that act as fronts for Zambada Garcia, the leader of a significant Sinaloa-based Mexican drug-trafficking organization, allows for their assets in the U.S. to be frozen and prohibits U.S. persons from conducting financial or commercial transactions with them. Zambada Garcia is one of the U.S.'s "most-wanted" drug kingpins, and our government is offering \$5 million for information leading to his arrest or conviction.

This designation by the U.S. Treasury today follows on the heels of another recent designation of 45 companies and 64 individuals, including several Mexican entities, as part of the drug-trafficking empire of Fabio Enrique Ochoa Vasco (a.k.a. "Carlos Mario"), a major Colombia-based drug trafficker.

The U.S. and Mexico have enjoyed several shared successes in our war against drug-trafficking in the past several months. On March 15th, acting on information supplied by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, Mexican law enforcement officers seized US \$205 million from the Mexico City home of an individual connected to the UNIMED pharmaceutical corporation of Hong Kong, China. Along with this largest single drug cash seizure in history, seven narco-traffickers were arrested.

Our law enforcement cooperation also led to two important extraditions recently. On March 29, 2007, Mexico extradited Daniel Perez, wanted in California for a brutal murder and kidnapping, to the United States to face justice. And on April 18, 2007, Rodolfo Negrete, wanted in California for a 24-hour killing spree, was extradited by Mexican authorities.

We have continued to welcome several high-level visitors from the United States to Mexico in the past two months. On April 24, 2007, our U.S. Treasury Secretary Henry M. Paulson visited Mexico City to meet with key Mexican officials. This visit by Secretary Paulson, like those in recent months of Attorney General Alberto Gonzales, Secretary of Commerce Carlos M. Gutierrez, and Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff, continue to emphasize just how important the bilateral relationship with Mexico is to the United States. Secretary Paulson met with President Calderon, Foreign Secretary Espinosa, and Finance Secretary Carstens. He also received a briefing from the Mexican Financial Intelligence Unit, which cooperates with the U.S. Treasury Department's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network.

On April 10-11, members of the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security, led by Representative Bennie Thompson (D-MS), traveled to Mexico City to discuss pressing security issues in both our countries with their Mexican counterparts. The U.S. delegation met with Secretary of Interior Francisco Javier Ramirez Acuña, Secretary of Public Security Genaro Garcia Luna, and Mexican

congressional representatives. Mexican law enforcement teams also gave a presentation on the challenge of combating and defeating organized crime. During these meetings, which the delegation members described as 'productive and informative,' both officials from Mexico and the United States recognized the urgent need for our countries to continue to cooperate to make our communities safer.

Also, on April 24, 2007 and May 3-4, 2007, respectively the mayors of America's two largest cities, Michael Bloomberg of New York and Antonio R. Villaraigosa of Los Angeles, came to Mexico to exchange ideas and visions on improving conditions in our two countries' major metropolitan areas.

In other Mission news, on April 20th, I joined several colleagues from the governments of both Mexico and the United States in a ceremony to commemorate Earth Day at Chapultepec Zoo. Around the world, the focus of this year's Earth Day celebration was species conservation. At the Earth Ceremony on the 20th, I announced that, as part of the U.S./Mexico Condor Conservation Program, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in partnership with the San Diego Zoo, will soon be bringing two California condors to Chapultepec Zoo to be used as part of an educational exhibit.

On April 27th, U.S. Border Protection Commissioner W. Ralph Basham and I, along with dignitaries from Mexico and the United States, inaugurated the new Veteran's Bridge SENTRI Lane, between Brownsville, Texas, and Matamoros, Mexico. The Veteran's Bridge 'Secure Electronic Network for Travelers Rapid Inspection' lane, known by the initials SENTRI, will allow trusted travelers who are enrolled in the SENTRI program to cross the border much faster.

Finally, with the troubling narco-violence in Sonora yesterday that left 22 dead including five police officers and the assassination this week of a top official in the intelligence unit of the Mexican attorney general's office, we are reminded of the great sacrifices of those courageous law enforcement officers in Mexico who have been brutally killed while performing their duty. On behalf of the U.S. Mission, I extend my deepest condolences to the families of the Mexican officials who have lost their lives in just the last week in Mexico, and hope that their murderers will be brought to justice swiftly.

An estimated 1000 people have been killed in drug-related violence in Mexico during the four and half months of 2007, and over 850 of them have been violent executions. Many of the victims of these executions have been government officials, including law enforcement officers, military officials and government body guards. Over 32 journalists covering narco-violence, as well, have faced kidnappings and murders in Mexico in the past 6 years.

When government officials and journalists are targeted by narco-traffickers, we must all be deeply alarmed because the intent of their murderers is to silence their courageous attempts to make our communities safer and our citizenry more aware.

As Mexican Attorney General Medina Mora said this week, "This war or this battle, as I prefer to characterize it, in reality is a battle that the Mexican state is obliged to wage to recover for our citizens the right to live in peace and tranquility . . . to recover our right to a normal way of life."

The United States shares the strong commitment of the administration of President Calderon to fight those who are terrorizing and ruining our communities. We also are committed to doing everything in our power to assist the Mexican government in protecting those very brave officials who are trying to take back those communities. Any threat to law enforcement and military officials is a threat to us all.

As always, I appreciate the opportunity to share with you information about the important bilateral relationship between Mexico and the United States. May God bless both our great nations.

Sincerely,  
Antonio O. Garza, Jr.

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# Honduras

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Rep. Rogers (R-AL), Delegate Norton (D-DC), Rep. Al Green (D-TX) and Embassy staff coordinate an inspection of cargo scanning operations at the Port of Cortes, Honduras.



Delegation Members and Deputy Secretary Michael Jackson join Honduran port authorities and CBP representatives at a cargo scanning facility in Honduras.

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## U.S. Delegation Visits Puerto Cortés

April 11, 2007



Press Release  
Statement from Chairman Thompson

Honduras - The following is a prepared statement from Congressman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS), Chairman of the Committee on Homeland Security of the U.S. House of Representatives:

"Port security is extremely important to both of our countries. Everyday, thousands of containers come into and out of Puerto Cortés. For the security of both our nations, we must protect this port, the containers that come through here, and the workers who keep trade and commerce moving.

Today, our delegation from the United States Congress is joined by representatives from the US Departments of Homeland Security and Energy to examine efforts to secure Honduras' ports as part of the Secure Freight Initiative. This initiative was required by the U.S. Congress in legislation passed in December. It is an important step toward ensuring the security of both of our nations. The Committee on Homeland Security in the U.S. Congress will work to ensure that the initiative is a successful model that can be used in other countries."

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# Honduras



The Delegation members and Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Jackson participated in a press conference at Puerto Cortes, Honduras after inspecting the Secure Freight Initiative pilot program.



Delegation Members, Deputy Secretary Michael Jackson, and Honduran Port Director Mr. Araque speak about US/Honduran cooperation to scan cargo departing for the United States.

## High-ranking American Officials Approve Port Administration (ENP) as a "Secure Port" It can detect any attempt at a terrorist attack

La Tribuna  
April 12, 2007

Puerto Cortés, Cortés - A delegation of high-ranking officials of the government of the United States, including the Deputy Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, Michael P. Jackson, arrived yesterday to inspect the operational testing phase of the Port Administrator (Empresa Nacional Portuaria - ENP), which started on April 2.

The delegation included six Democratic members of Congress and three Republican members, reviewed gamma- and X-ray equipment, radiation detection, the relationship between the customs officials and the border police, and the perimeter security. The high-ranking officials affirmed that the evaluation presented positive results, since the logistics and the equipment that are being used in the container security are adequate.

Jackson stated that the alarms that are being used to detect anomalies in the containers are effective and have allowed that work begin effectively. He stressed that port security is very important for both countries, since approximately 700,000 containers of various products pass through this port each year. The "container security" initiative was required by the Congress of the United States in legislation approved last December. The testing phase is an important step for strengthening the broad strengthening of the security of the global supply chain and for the prevention of the transport of nuclear or radioactive material via the maritime supply.

"We are interested in other ports, but this is a unique, very complex initiative, therefore we will learn many lessons here," expressed the high-ranking American. He referred to the next phase as taking lessons learning from the pilot system and standardizing them among the industry to begin inspecting all cargo that enters the United States.

The Ambassador of the United States, Charles Ford, stressed that the ENP is the third port in the world to use this modern system of security. Meanwhile, the head of the ENP, Edwin Araque, pointed out that the security methods had prevented problems with containers that pass through daily. He recalled that the training of the port personnel permitted them to detect any terrorist attack, and that on October 12, the port would be converted to fully operational status. On March 31, the port in Qasim, Pakistan passed the operational test phase.

(The last paragraph identified the members of the delegation).

# Virgin Islands

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Members of the delegation hold a bilateral meeting with the government of the British Virgin Islands regarding security cooperation between our two nations.



Captain Tunstall, Commander of Coast Guard Sector San Juan briefed the Members on smuggling interdiction missions in the Virgin Islands and the routes taken by undocumented migrants to enter into the United States Virgin Islands from the neighboring British Virgin Islands.

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## **BVI AND U.S. GOVERNMENTS PLEDGE TO ENHANCE COOPERATION**

April 13, 2007



Press Release  
Office of the Government of the British Virgin Islands

The BVI and United States Governments have agreed to tighten their cooperation in a number of areas after the successful conclusion of a high level meeting that was hosted by the Territory last evening at Long Bay Beach Resort.

His Excellency the Governor David Pearey, Chief Minister Honourable Dr. D. Orlando Smith and senior Government managers met with a congressional delegation of the U.S. House of Representatives' Committee on Homeland Security.

Illegal immigration, human smuggling, money crimes, and advanced clearing for yachts and ferries operating between the two jurisdictions were among the issues discussed.

The Chief Minister said he was satisfied with the meeting's outcome and described it as being very useful. "I was pleased that so many congressmen and women were able to meet with us, in recognition of the obvious trans-border connection that exists between the BVI and United States Virgin Islands," he noted.

The Chief Minister also welcomed an offer of assistance from the U.S. Government to help the Territory in securing its borders. "I think they understand that in trying to protect their borders, protecting our borders will serve both of us efficiently," he said, while adding that Government welcomes the offers of

assistance to combat illegal immigration and in patrolling the Territory's airspace among other areas of cross-border illicit activity.

Head of the visiting delegation to the Territory, and Chairman of the Committee on Homeland Security, Representative Bennie Thompson said it is prudent for the BVI and U.S Governments to formalise their cooperation in light of the many issues of common worry.

"We are concerned about the narcotic trafficking, human smuggling, border security, and illegal immigration issues among others so it makes good sense for us to formalise our cooperation in some form of agreement," he told the Department of Information and Public Relations.

Governor Pearey said the meeting was held in a positive atmosphere and against the background of strong cooperation. "We were very gratified by the generous offers that we got from the U.S. delegation to further improve our cooperation against various forms of illegal activities," he said.

Other members of the BVI delegation included Deputy Chief Minister Honourable Ronnie W. Skelton, Minister for Communications and Works Honourable Elmore Stoutt, Honourable Attorney General Mr. Chernow Jallow, and several other senior Government managers.

Besides its leader the U.S. delegation comprised representatives Mike Rogers, Sheila Jackson-Lee, Henry Cuellar, Al Green, Daniel Lungren, and Bill Pascrell; delegates Donna Christensen and Eleanor Holmes-Norton; and Captain Tunstall of the U.S. Coast Guard.

Available at:

[http://www.bvi.org.uk/news\\_item.asp?news\\_id=843](http://www.bvi.org.uk/news_item.asp?news_id=843)



**Chairman Thompson (D-MS), Rep. Cuellar (D-TX), Rep. Dan Lungren (R-CA), and Delegate Christensen (D-USVI) discussed maritime threats to the Virgin Islands with Governor de Jongh.**

# Virgin Islands



Chairman Thompson leads a roundtable discussion on Homeland Security threats to the Virgin Islands. The roundtable included the Governor of the USVI and his homeland security team, federal law enforcement, and port authorities.



USVI - The Delegation gathers with a crew of Coasties assigned to Sector San Juan before discussing maritime interdiction and smuggling threats to the region aboard their cutters.

## BVI and US discuss border security issues

Caribbean Net News  
April 13, 2007

ROAD TOWN, BVI: Chief Minister of the British Virgin Islands, Dr Orlando Smith, headed a delegation during a meeting with a congressional team from the United States House of Representatives in the Territory to discuss areas of mutual interests relating to border security.

The Chief Minister was joined by Governor David Pearey, Deputy Chief Minister Ronnie Skelton, the Minister for Communications and Works Elmore Stoutt, Attorney General Cherno Jallow and several other senior government managers.

The visiting US delegation comprised members of the Committee on Homeland Security under the leadership of its chairman Representative Bennie Thompson.

Other delegates included representatives Mike Rogers, Sheila Jackson-Lee, Henry Cuellar, Al Green, Daniel Lungren, and Bill Pascrell; delegates Donna Christensen and Eleanor Holmes Norton; and Captain Tunstall of the US Coast Guard.

Director of the BVI International Affairs Secretariat Lorna Smith, who was also a member of the BVI delegation, said the meeting's objective was to discuss security issues of common concern to the two governments.

# Virgin Islands

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## **Delegate Christensen, Committee Members Survey Regional State of Homeland Security**

St. Thomas Source  
By Ananta Pancham  
April 13, 2007

It's been a whirlwind tour for members of the Homeland Security Committee Congressional Committee.

A four-day tour through the Latin American and Caribbean regions has given members of the Homeland Security Committee Congressional Delegation (CODEL) a better insight into local border patrol and security issues and the ability, says one member, to draft a more "comprehensive" national homeland security bill.

During a press conference held Friday on St. Thomas, Congressman Bennie G. Thompson -- accompanied by Delegate Donna M. Christensen and members of the House's Committee on Homeland Security -- called the trip more of a "fact-finding mission," designed to check whether or not homeland security procedures used in both regions are up to snuff with congressional standards.

"We also wanted to see whether places in the Caribbean have put in place the necessary partnerships with the U.S. government, or whether they need extra help in certain areas. That's why we came -- to look at any gaps in security, to look at the resources and to look at what's working around the regions," he added.

Thompson, who represents the second district of Mississippi, also serves as the chairman of the Committee on Homeland Security, of which Christensen is a part.

According to Christensen, the nine-member delegation began its journey on Tuesday, working their way through Mexico, Honduras, the British Virgin Islands and the territory in an attempt to meet with various government officials and law enforcement representatives.

Christensen said that while in the territory, the group was able meet with local homeland security personnel, along with Gov. John P. deJongh Jr., and took a tour of the local coastline in an attempt to emphasize the need for a permanent marine patrol presence. Over the past few years, Christensen has aggressively campaigned for a border patrol unit, which would help secure the territory's waters and curb the inflow of illegal weapons, drugs and immigrants.

While members of the delegation said they were "impressed" by local homeland security efforts, they also said the trip had "brought to light" several pressing issues within the Caribbean region.

"The value of this CODEL is that it speaks to the issue of the war on terrorism, where our responsibility is to the totality of security," said Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee. "We can't just safeguard the nation's biggest airports -- we have to look at all areas of vulnerability. So, the trip has really opened my eyes to issues such as the flow of illegal immigrants and the potential paths a terrorist could take into these areas."

Thompson also highlighted the region's need for more equipment and manpower. "Most of the assets in the area are stationed in Puerto Rico," he explained. "And while they do a good job, it's still a far shout, in some instances, from Puerto Rico to some of the islands."

One of Christensen's concerns centered upon the need to balance the local security issues with the territory's economic needs. "A few of the complaints we've been hearing have come from tourists who have to go through customs screening in the Virgin Islands," she said. "We're talking about double screenings at the airport, long lines and disgruntled passengers. The issue here is that we don't want our efforts to keep the Virgin Islands safe to negatively affect the people that come here."

Christensen added that the committee would look at working with officials from the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and U.S. Customs Service to streamline the screening process.

While some of the region's security issues are critical, the group remained positive about the next few steps of the fact-finding process, which includes traveling to Key West, Fla., holding additional committee hearings, and making reports to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

"All in all, it was a successful visit, and we really saw a willingness on the part of all governments to form partnerships, so we can deal with nautical trafficking, illegal immigration and other such issues," Thompson said. "I think by working together, we will be able to meet the security goals of each country, and eventually be able to put together a comprehensive policy to address some of the dilemmas and problems we saw and heard over the past few days."

## **British Virgin Islands, USA strengthen links**

April 14, 2007  
BBC

*Text of report by Caribbean Media Corporation news agency website*

TORTOLA, BVI, CMC - The British Virgin Islands (BVI) and the United States have agreed to strengthen their cooperation in a number of areas including money laundering and human smuggling.

Governor of this British Overseas Territory David Pearey, headed a delegation that included Chief Minister Dr Orlando Smith and senior government officials for talks with a delegation from the House of Representatives' Committee on Homeland Security.

Officials said the meeting discussed a number of issues including illegal immigration, human smuggling, money crimes, and advanced clearing for yachts and ferries operating between the two countries.

Smith later told reporters that he was satisfied with the outcome of the deliberations.

"I was pleased that so many Congressmen and women were able to meet with us, in recognition of the obvious trans-border connection that exists between the BVI and United States Virgin Islands," he said, welcoming assistance from Washington in securing the island's borders.

"I think they understand that in trying to protect their borders, protecting our borders will serve both of us efficiently," he said, while adding that Government welcomes the offers of assistance to combat illegal immigration and patrolling the Territory's airspace among other areas of cross-border illicit activity.

Head of the visiting delegation and Chairman of the Committee on Homeland Security, Bennie Thompson said it is prudent for the BVI and Washington formalise their cooperation in light of the many common issues.

"We are concerned about the narcotic trafficking, human smuggling, border security, and illegal immigration issues among others so it makes good sense for us to formalise our cooperation in some form of agreement," he said.

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### **Letter from Mr. D. Orlando Smith, Chief Minister of the British Virgin Islands to Chairman Thompson**

April 30, 2007



Dear Congressman,

It was a pleasure to meet with you and your delegation on the 12th of this month. I write to thank you for taking the time from your packed schedule to meet with us in the British Virgin Islands and for the very useful exchange of views that resulted. Please convey my thanks to the rest of your delegation for visiting us and for their participation in our discussions.

I was very appreciative of your willingness to continue our discussion with a view to rendering whatever assistance possible to us especially considering that at their closest point, our respective territories are less than a mile away from each other. To this end I propose to visit your offices on either the 11th or 14th of May to further discuss matters related to immigration, customs and related matters.

I trust that one of these dates – preferably the 14th would be convenient to you and look forward to hearing from you at your convenience.

Yours sincerely,

D. Orlando Smith  
Chief Minister